



STENNIS SPACE CENTER

Small Business Innovation Research Program Fact Sheet

NASA's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program was established by Congress in 1982 to provide increased opportunities for small businesses to participate in federal research and development (R&D) in order to increase employment and improve the competitiveness of the United States.

The program's objectives are to stimulate U.S. technological innovation, use small businesses to meet federal R&D needs, foster and encourage participation by socially and economically disadvantaged persons in technological innovation and increase private sector commercialization of innovations derived from federal R&D. Legislation enacted in 1992 strengthened and extended the program through the year 2000 and increased the emphasis on pursuing commercial applications of SBIR project results.

At NASA's John C. Stennis Space Center in South Mississippi, the SBIR program has helped several companies through Phase I and II contract awards. Following are recent examples: (1) Cimarron Computer Engineering Inc. of Albuquerque, N.M., developed a calibration system for airborne sensors used on the NASA Stennis Learjet for various data collection activities; (2) Thermalscan, Inc. of Baton Rouge La., developed a facilities pavement scanner system for use in collecting and analyzing roadway and airport runway pavement conditions for scheduling predictive maintenance; and (3) Barringer Patents Inc. of Golden, Colo., developed a radar remote detection system for subsurface features for use in aircraft and satellite surveying of soil and vegetation moisture in agriculture areas, salinity or toxic contaminants in soils, and detection and mapping of buried ordnance.

Eligibility to participate in the SBIR program is limited to U.S. -owned and -operated small businesses organized for profit with 500 or less employees. Participating in NASA's SBIR program, a business may receive up to having up to \$670,000 of seed money to explore a technical idea without any debt or loss of control or equity in the small business. The sole obligation is to deliver the product described in the contract and to make the required reports. Small businesses are encouraged to use federal resources for their own benefit while delivering project results of value to NASA.

The NASA, SBIR program is an agencywide effort that contributes to NASA's mission in planning, directing and conducting R&D for civilian uses of space and aeronautics. Under the direction of NASA Headquarters Office of Space Access and Technology in Washington, D.C., the SBIR program is

implemented by the 10 NASA field installations, including Stennis Space Center. NASA is required by law to allocate 2 percent of its fiscal year 1995 R&D budget appropriation to its SBIR program.

The processes of innovation and bringing new products to the market place have a high degree of technical and financial risk. Therefore, the SBIR program is structured into three phases:

PHASE I is the opportunity to establish the feasibility and technical merit of a proposed innovation. Phase I contracts are selected competitively and last for six months with funding up to \$70,000 in 1995 at NASA.

PHASE II is the major R&D effort in SBIR. It continues the most promising Phase I projects based on scientific and technical merit, results of Phase I, expected value to NASA, company capability and commercial potential. Phase II places greater emphasis on evidence of commercialization than Phase I. Phase II contracts are selected competitively and last up to 24 months with funding up to \$600,000 in 1995 at NASA. Typically, NASA anticipates that approximately half of awarded Phase I projects will be selected for Phase II continuations.

PHASE III is the process of completing the development of a product to make it commercially available. The financial resources needed must be obtained outside the NASA SBIR funding set aside. Private sector investment in various forms is the usual vehicle for the Phase III process. NASA can fund Phase III activities for follow-on development or production of an innovation beyond Phase II for its own application or use.

Each NASA SBIR program cycle begins with the issuance of an annual SBIR program solicitation. NASA seeks Phase I proposals suggesting possible solutions to problems or opportunities stated in the solicitation. The solicitation provides basic information about the SBIR program: eligibility requirements, instructions for preparing and submitting Phase I proposals, information on proposal evaluation and selection factors and procedures, and considerations related to subsequent Phase II and Phase III activities. The solicitation is divided into a number of technical topic areas. Each topic area is broken down into subtopics that describe the agency's current R&D needs.

For more information about NASA's Small Business Innovation Research program, contact the Stennis Space Center SBIR Program Office at (601) 688-3964.

NASA

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Document: FS-SSC-013 (9510)
Modified: October 1995



Return to Stennis Fact Sheets